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Your kindness is appreciated.

Sherry & Family
Jim & Jan Dillow

FAULKNER: We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of those who sent flowers or food or maybe even a card. No matter how big or small the gesture, they are all very much appreciated. It is nice to know that Dad impacted so many people and that he is going to be missed by so many.

Donna Faulkner
Charlie and Kris Faulkner Family
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Happy Birthday to:

Le. Kenzie, Izaak & the ol' guy ... David Kent

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Public Notice

The Jo-Carroll Depot Local Redevelopment Authority is currently accepting bids for the 2010 mowing season. Maps are available in the office. Please send bids to Jo-Carroll Depot LRA, 3651 Crim Dr., Ste. 1, Savanna, IL 61074. For more information call (815) 273-4371. All bids must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17, 2010.

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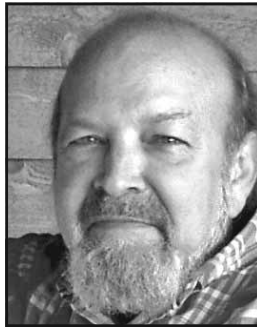
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What's On Your Mind?

by Bob Herman, ACSW



In Honor of Adolescents

When my son was 16, he began to think about ways to challenge and distinguish himself. He envisioned doing things he felt sure no peers had ever done – an adventure that would test his skill, courage and resourcefulness in some unique way. Many readers can probably recall similar visions during their adolescence: hitchhiking across the county, building a raft and floating it down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, publishing an original comic book, soaring in a homemade glider ... or maybe building an elegant hotrod out of a junker. Such visions stretch our imaginations and fill us with valuable excitement about our future potential. Some visions prove to be attainable, and some may require more than our current readiness. But they all infuse us with excitement and a sense of adventure.

My son envisioned a long camping trip, possibly alone and far away from home. Though he had been camping before, he had never experienced camping alone or far away from home. He seemed to have no conflict about taking on this adventure, but I worried that it was too big for a first step forward. I wanted him to pursue his goal ... but safely. Thus, negotiations began. Grudgingly, he accepted a scaling down of the dream. I tried to be clear that I saw his dream

not beyond realization but rather requiring some smaller preliminary steps – *readiness* steps.

The negotiated plan gave him four days in a nearby State Park campground, alone and with only one stipulation: since he would have no companion to call for help in case of illness or accident, he had to phone me by nine o'clock each evening just to check in. Failure to call would *terminate* his adventure. Though he bristled a bit at these limits, he packed his gear, and we headed out for the State Park. He had done his planning, made lists of equipment and food he'd need, and on the drive there, we reviewed how much food and ice he'd need. I suggested we stop at a nearby supermarket to gather it up, since he'd have no car available once I left him at the campground. In the market, I could sense his resentment over my disruption of his plan to go solo (and maybe he was right – he would probably have found a way to get to the market on his own).

When we arrived at the campground, I offered to help him set up camp, but that was going too far. He wanted to do it himself ... and he was right! I headed home, impressed by the determination he had shown in pursuing what he wanted, *no matter how it turned out*. The hours passed back in the city, and the agreed on telephone check-in time came and went. No call. I was back in the car, heading for the campground an hour away.

When I arrived at about 11:00 PM, the campground was surprisingly dark ... and very empty. It was Sunday night, and it appeared that the few campers we had seen when we arrived had packed up and gone home. My son's pup tent sat alone in the huge campground. He was alone! I found his site and parked with my headlights illuminating his tent. I called to him. He emerged from the tent, irritated. He displayed his resentment at my demand that he pack up, and he continued snarling while he dumped all the equipment and supplies into the car. Interspersed were some explanations for why he *couldn't* call me, but even while explaining, he kept loading the car.

Flash forward one year. My son again approached me with a plan to go camping, this time with his friend. They wanted to spend a couple of days on an island in the Mississippi River, he told me. But there was something timid, restrained in his request, and I ask him about it. He told me that, after last summer's camping "disaster", he expected me not to help him setting up another camping trip. I was stunned! In that moment I realized that he and I had come away from last year's camping experience with very different interpretations. He was feeling that he'd failed and had lost credibility. He thought he had earned an eternal condemnation for "screwing it up". He had no awareness that I was actually

quite proud of him for pursuing his dream and having the guts to at least *try*. Having seen the strangely ghostly campground, I knew that I, too, would have felt uncomfortable there, despite my years of camping experience, and would have found a way to get myself out of there.

"That was last year," I said to him. "This is now. You are older, wiser and with additional experience under your belt. Of course you can camp out with your friend." And he did spend a couple of days on the Mississippi with his best friend, a weekend complete with a long night of horrific storms and lightning. But they made it.

This story always reminds me that our adolescent sons and daughters deserve our respect as they stretch for new horizons, often suffering humiliation and "defeat". What we need to value is the special courage and spirit given to teens in that time of life when we will try things we might never again attempt in later years.

I think back to my first adventure canoeing and camping in the wilds – a four-day odyssey. I was 18 – two years older than my son when he had his State Park adventure. My best friend and I set out with no conception of what was required for such a trip. We were unprepared for the two days of battering rain, had not brought along enough food and we confronted situations

that placed us in real danger. We arrived at our destination sick and exhausted. Yet that *misadventure*, for which I might not have had the spunk a few years later, opened me to a *life* of adventure on the Mississippi.

When teens try to do something special, especially when their plans seem unreasonable or unrealistic to their parents, they are vulnerable – not to their parents or to real danger so much as to their own self-esteem. They can be quite hard on themselves (as my son was after his first ill-fated camping trip alone) because they believe they have failed. They can feel humiliated and need a way out that saves face. We can't control how they interpret their own experiences, but perhaps, remembering our own dreams and ambitions in adolescence, we owe it to them to let them know that we respect their efforts and their willingness to take risks, whatever the result.

•••

I invite suggestions for subjects you'd like to see discussed in this column: mail4bobh@gmail.com, or send a note (Attn: Bob Herman) through *The Prairie Advocate*. I also enjoy opportunities to meet personally with any group interested in discussing family or child-rearing topics (at no fee).



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